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ABSTRACT

A model program was implemented to provide services to 17 children with special needs in a community-based preschool. Meetings with representatives of the public schools and the community preschool center established a framework for providing inclusive education and resulted in development of an interagency agreement, which clarified staff and agency roles, legal issues, services, and costs. Time was allocated for instructional planning by preschool staff members, special education staff, and an early childhood consultant. A questionnaire was administered before and after implementation of the program to determine the ability and confidence level of the staff to provide services in the classroom. The results indicated that staff were more comfortable with the implementation of team teaching and gained confidence in their ability to work with children with special needs through inservice training. Letters were sent to businesses to encourage support within the community for innovative programming. Fundraising resulted in receipt of donations and in-kind services. Appendices include the teacher attitude questionnaire, a monthly listing of curriculum topics, a description of the special educator role, and a modified lesson plan. (Contains 25 references.) (SW)

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Establishing a Public School and Community Based Program Partnership through the Implementation of an Inclusion Model

by

Patrice E. Farquharson

Cluster 53

A Practicum II Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Nova Southeastern University

1995

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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May 3, 1995

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This practicum report was submitted by Patrice Farquharson under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:

May 5, 1995

Date of Final Approval of Report

Mary W. Staggs, Ed.D.

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ABSTRACT

Establishing a Public School and Community Based Program Partnership through the Implementation of an Inclusion Model. Farquharson, Patrice E., 1995: Practicum Report Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth studies. Inclusion/ Special Education/Developmental Programs/Public and Preschool Collaboration/Staff Attitudes/Innovative Partnerships.

This practicum focused on the need for collaboration between agencies to address the placement of children with special needs in a community-based preschool setting. Community support, staff attitudes and the changing role of the classroom teachers were explored.

The writer developed a staff attitude questionnaire, sent a letter to businesses to encourage support within the community for innovative programming, communicated frequently with cooperating administrators, prepared an interagency agreement, and wrote a proposal for a statewide presentation on inclusion.

The results indicated staff gained confidence in their ability to team teach; were more willing to have a child with special needs in the classroom after training; community support increased significantly, and administrators now work together across professional domains to provide choices in preschool placements.

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Permission Statement

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The practicum site is a child development center which is situated in a working class community. This city is located on the outskirts of a major urban community, with a population of nearly 54,000 people. The community hosts a private university, a major pharmaceutical company and several larger universities border the city, including an ivy league school. The program staff have worked creatively with area colleges to obtain student interns to work at the center as part of required training or in return for tuition, striving to maintain program quality despite reduced resources.

The center is located in a community center which also houses the adult daycare center. The proximity of the adult daycare center has sparked the initiation of an interagency program for both the children and incapacitated adults. The location of a community agency on aging (third floor of the same building), has made a significant difference in the

volunteer work force here. Seven enthusiastic foster grandparents, who are available to the center through a program designed for older workers over the age of 60, have balanced the staff completely. A positive relationship exists between this center, the board of education and the city administration, with its Commissioner of Human Resources serving as a liaison to the center's board of directors. Consequently, this relationship provides a major internal strength for this organization.

As a state funded nonprofit organization, the city in which the center is located applies for a grant and in turn signs over the yearly operation of the program to the board of directors. The program proceeds to function as a small incorporated business with the board of directors legally responsible for administering it. The center is also licensed by the state to ensure all basic health, nutrition and safety regulations are met. The state funded program has been in operation for 15 years and began as a daycare program for 45 children. It now includes a preschool for 3 to 5 year olds, a toddler program for children ages 1 to 3 accompanied by parents, and an afterschool program for children ages 4 to 6. Because a sliding scale of payment is offered, relying on community and foundation support is paramount to survival. As state funding has been cutback, an increase in seeking private sources of funding has been necessary to continue

offering quality, high caliber early childhood care. Recently, the city was awarded a $450,000 expansion grant to renovate and add three rooms to the existing space for the center. This addition will help alleviate the space constraints currently in existence.

The center's population is constantly changing with services being provided to a range of socio-economic and culturally diverse families. The office staff consists of the executive director, three part-time administrative assistants, one part-time nurse and a social worker. This well integrated staff strives to meet the individual needs of the center's varying clientele. Staff dedication is prevalent with three members recently recognized for 15 years of service. Additionally, the average length of service for a staff member at the center is 9 years. This includes regular education teachers, assistant teachers, aides, a paraprofessional, and a special education teacher. Educational backgrounds range from high school diplomas to master degrees. This staff devotion has enabled the program to maintain a reputation for offering high caliber services and recognition as a nationally accredited program.

The Writer's Role in the Setting

This writer, in the multi-faceted position of executive director of a child development center, is accountable for the management of 30 professional, volunteer and support staff.

This title also carries the full responsibility for the development and administration of education programs, operational duties, including fiscal management, staff development, and labor negotiations.

The writer has a degree in administrative education, holds a masters degree in early childhood education and is certified to teach preschool through sixth grade. Previous positions of the writer include; assisant teacher, teacher and assistant director, at this center.

The executive director develops and administers the total program, carries responsibility for its operation and acts as liaison between board and staff. Further description of duties include; the support, facilitation and improvement of the services within the policies established by the board, bringing before the board information that will assist it in formulating sound policies, help the board to develop such policies, and to make recommendations for changes and improvements in accordance with community needs. Leadership is provided in planning and evaluating center services. The various components of the program are integrated by providing for and keeping open the lines of communication among staff and by clearly defining the allocation of authority within the program. A continuum of staff development is generated in cooperation with local resources. The writer must also act as a liaison and maintain a working relationship between the program and the

appropriate organizations, groups, and individuals; local, state and federal government. In general, the executive director works to interpret the progam to various sectors of the community, attends and participates in community meetings, and accepts public speaking engagements when requested.

Making the community aware of the growing need for early childhood education and exploring ways to meet this need is a constant challenge for the writer. The writer as another aspect of the position held has had the opportunity to share various experiences with other professionals at national, New England and local conferences. The writer is also an early childhood consultant at the state university level.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Parents of preschool children with special needs were required to rely on placement decisions made by school officials for placement of their children in a preschool program. Additionally community based preschools had been omitted when consideration for appropriate placement for children with special needs was made. An inclusive setting for children with special needs in a community based program was an option yet to be explored and tried by administrators.

With the emphasis on prevention, the social worker from this agency has been more aggressive in the childrens' initial interview and assessment process leading to identification of more children with special needs. Many challenging behaviors had surfaced in this agency's clientele, and referrals had increased to the local board of education for special education services.

When a planning and placement meeting took place, parents were not offered any options for services, the

individual education plan developed at this meeting was always intended to take place in a self-contained special education classroom regardless of the unique needs of each individual child. When staff from the preschool/daycare program attended these team meetings, descriptions of the child's behavior or performance in the classroom was offered. However credence was not always given to these observations, and staff became reluctant to share further information, feeling unprofessional in responding, even though daycare staff provided service to the children for 6 hours a day.

Parents of children enrolled in this preschool/daycare program were concerned about children starting off in one program and then being bussed to a different location to receive supplemental services. The children with special needs were tired and difficult to manage upon returning to this program to complete the day. Furthermore, this curriculum offered a variety of activities incorporating a developmentally appropriate approach to learning and the agency maintained a national early childhood accreditation.

A diverse family population did not always understand the nature of the planning and placement meeting and were unsure of specific rights of families. Cultural sensitivity had not yet been initiated in the assessment process, nor had it been seen as crucial to providing the families with much needed support.

Simply stated, parents of preschool children with special

needs had traditionally relied on placement decisions made by school officials for placement of their children in a preschool program, regardless of the child's individual needs.

Problem Documentation

A lawsuit was initiated by a parent, citing the Board of Education for not offering a community based program as a choice to allow for the least restrictive environment. As a result of this initial lawsuit several families joined and due process was followed. The problem was evident in each child's individual education plan (IEP). This plan is developed for the particular child not the whole class, and includes the child's specialized instruction with related services. The plan also lists what services will actually be provided to the child in the plan and where the services will take place (Pediatric Research and Training Center, 1989). Only one placement in the community was currently available to families. Outside placement was also offered at a considerable cost to the school district.

According to Turnbull & Turnbull (1991) the public has not recognized that all children and families have the right to dream regardless of differences in abilities. Additionally, individual lesson plans do not list the positive aspects and abilities of the child first, and then include recommendations to facilitate learning and determine placement. Parents were not given the choice to become involved in the community in

which the family resided.

As for the public school personnel, most were adamant about maintaining the identity of the segregated classroom. Statements have been made and recorded in school board minutes by school personnel against inclusion in community based programs.

Additionally, many in the community including public school officials were unaware of the variety of programs available to the citizens here. One of the reasons for this is the fact that this program had never been advertised. The waiting list was usually estimated at 50 families. Publicizing the center for clients had not been a priority, which made it difficult to establish credibility among the general public and the non-affiliated population.

Comments had been made by some individuals questioning the placement of special needs children in regular classrooms. Some parents against inclusion had written letters to the Superintendent of Schools fearing loss of additional services if children were placed in community programs. The records therefore clearly show that professionals and citizens in this city were not yet working across domains and collaboration of services had yet to be explored.

Causative Analysis

Several reasons for non collaboration existed. First of all educators were not willing to work together to make changes

for the benefit of the individual child. What was best for the child was not always considered when deciding on a proper placement, school setting or the capability of the teacher.

Educators themselves had not gained practical knowledge to understand inclusion. Fear of losing their authority or role status in the classroom was another hindrance to learning and working together across domains. Caring for children and attending to their physical, emotional and educational needs was a difficult concept for many educators to face. Another obstacle to utilizing a team approach was the varied educational requirements for this community based program staff and those staff members employed by the school district. Elementary education teaching certificates were not required in the writer's program, but training specifically in early childhood education was. The school district in this city had also focused on an academic curriculum with goals and objectives for preschool children that were not always realistically attainable. Special education teachers had not been trained in early childhood education and used different teaching techniques; including striving to achieve academic standards that were not always appropriate for a typically developing child, let alone a child with special needs. The philosophy of this child development center incorporates a developmentally appropriate approach to the curriculum.

Salary differences were obvious. Teachers at this nonprofit center made an average of $19,000 a year vs.

$28,000 for a starting teacher in the public school system. Now an additional workload was required for these same teachers. This created another barrier to inclusion with lesson planning taking more time and several objectives for individual children needing to be met.

Turf issues existed between agencies. It was not easy to relinquish space to others, or share classroom equipment. With any changing process, confusion exists in defining of roles and responsibilities of the participants involved. The role of the special educator was seen as changing dramatically, with duties viewed more as a consultative nature to regular education teachers then the more familiar role of a designated classroom teacher.

Financial constraints and budgets of both agencies involved were reviewed before a merger could take place. Several areas including cost of tuition, transportation, consumable supplies, program materials, and substitute issues all needed to be readdressed. These issues were seen as a burden on already tight fiscal situations.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

A review of the literature on the topic of inclusive education revealed a wide range of views from professionals. The debate between professionals involved those who felt that an inclusive setting allowed children with special needs to learn from their typical peers and the other view held was that

children with special needs would receive less services.

Some felt children with mild developmental delays had a higher rate of positive peer social interaction (Bailey,1989). Others felt teacher facilitated interactions need to take place to promote peer relationships. Inclusion was much more than physical placement. Children with mild developmental delays were shown to have a higher rate of peer related social behavior in an integrated setting (Esposito & Koorland, 1989). Social isolation was thought to be a result of children with challenging behaviors not being readily accepted by peers or being removed from the group more often, therefore opportunity to interact was lessened (Peterson & Haralick, 1977).

Insufficient parent involvement was noted by some. One of the barriers to effective intervention was the varying cultural backgrounds, values and beliefs of many of these families. Many diverse views were held concerning medicine and healing. Western views were focused on prevention. Other cultures accept having a child with special needs as fate, and some groups stigmatize families who have a child with disabilities (Hanson, Lynch & Wayman,1990a).

As a consequence of stigmatization many parents tend to remain isolated from social contact with other families and the community. As a result their social life was restricted to the extended family. Many basic social behaviors including violation of personal space, not being toilet trained and

destructive characteristics of some disabilities such as autism, made it difficult for parents to negotiate placement in a community-based agency (Gray,1993).

Sensitivity was not always utilized when assessing family medical history, or when identifying family members who were seen as having an important role in the rearing of the child with the disability. Furthermore, the evaluators on the planning and placement teams did not always have a clear understanding of the general values and beliefs of a culture. This caused pitfalls and misunderstandings during the intake process and alienated the family. It also made it difficult to gain the confidence of family members involved when trying to administer a service plan (Bruder, Anderson, Schatz, & Caldera, 1991; Chan,1990; Barrera,1993; & Hanson, Lynch & Wayman, 1990b).

The undefined changing role of the classroom staff was seen as a major deterrent to a smooth transition of inclusion. Inadequate teacher preparation and competence is questioned not only by the regular education or community-based preschool staff, but by the special education staff as well. Training in the developmentally appropriate and more child initiated type of learning was a difficult concept for some special educators to grasp. Most teachers with years of experience had not been encouraged to pursue a preschool endorsement to their certification. The trend has just recently begun to focus on children from birth through eight

(Gusky,1986; Bredekamp,1987). Additionally teachers with a public school background were not used to team teaching or planning cooperatively for lesson plans. The community based programs traditionally had a smaller staff-child ratio due to strict licensing requirements; public schools in this state are exempt from preschool licensing. On the other hand, preschool teachers did not necessarily need to have a teaching certificate, although many programs do require staff to have a four year bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a related field. Inservice training is also required to maintain an accreditation or license. The different requirements for teachers were questioned by some, with inadequate preparation and not being seen as competent as state certified teachers a contributing factor.

Turf issues existed, such as sharing of space and placement of school personnel in different buildings. Ties were cut between peers, and friendships that had developed over the years were disrupted. Many personnel found this very threatening, leading to the thought that teacher's own attitudes provided a tremendous barrier to inclusion (Berra,1989; Odom & McEvoy,1990; Rose & Smith,1993a).

A merger with another organization, created a need for immediate restructuring. Bolman & Deal (1991) describe the change in system functioning with additional staff. Personnel become very committed to the domain of their particular interest and felt the need to enhance and promote that domain,

regardless of whether or not it is best for the organization. This may lead to conflicts concerning the ability to set priorities.

Many administrators did not have the practical knowledge of the key characteristics of organizational culture to effectively deal with conflict tolerance as mentioned by Robbins (1992) that occurred in situations where different philosophies were present. The characteristics defining an organizational culture included individual initiatives, risk tolerance, identity and management support. Many areas of management had not been investigated by administrators. Therefore, professionals had not yet worked together across domains to explore innovative ways to meet the growing needs of staff, parents and children within the community (Project ETC. 1990).

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The goal of this practicum was that children with special needs would have apppropriate options for placement in special programs to meet their individual needs.

Expected Outcomes

After practicum implementation, the expected outcomes envisioned by the writer were as follows:

1. Collaboration would occur across professional domains as evidenced by at least 4 meetings between administrators and staff to develop an interagency agreement.

2. Ongoing examination and expansion of services would be provided for typical children as well as children with special needs administered in a classroom setting as evidenced by documentation of staff meetings and lesson plans.

3. Support within the community would continue for innovative programming as evidenced by the number of donations, correspondences or in-kind services received.

Measurement of Outcomes

Outcomes after practicum implementation, were measured in the following ways:

For outcome 1, the measurement was the documentation of the number of meetings between staff and administrators and the interagency agreement.

For outcome 2, the measurement was the collection of data through use of a likert scale to elicit information about staff's ability and confidence level to provide service in the classroom. A pre and post questionnaire (see Appendix A) was administered before and after practicum implementation. In addition records of staff meetings were kept.

Outcome 3 was measured by recording the number of donations, correspondences or inkind services received from community resouces as a result of letters sent.

Furthermore, entries were made to a journal weekly, to record any unexpected events that occurred throughout the implementation period. Documention of all the meetings held provided additional information for the writer.

Chapter IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The problem was parents of preschool children with special needs had traditionally relied on placement decisions made by school officials for placement of their children in a preschool program, regardless of the child's individual needs. Parents of children enrolled in this preschool/daycare program were concerned about children starting off in one program and then being bussed to a different location to receive supplemental services. This agency maintains a national early childhood accreditation and parents felt this setting provided a safe and developmetally appropriate learning environment for their children.

Several solutions to the problem that parents of preschool children with special needs had when relying on placement decisions made by school officials for placement of their children in a preschool program were described in the literature. The discussion of solutions also reflected the omission of community-based programs as a possible inclusion

setting for children with special needs.

Murphy (1991) suggested that it's time to redefine education as it is known today to meet the needs of the consumer. Families had tremendously diverse needs, including needing extended hours, year round support and the development of programs to meet individual needs of children.

School administrators were usually so overwhelmed with providing placements that the time for innovative planning to create changes never seemed to be established. However, if a cohesive group effort was made to examine the challenges as well as the opportunities for collaboration of community agencies, many would benefit (McClean & Hanline, 1990).

Several positive results happen when agencies plan to work together toward a common goal. Public-private partnerships had begun to form to explore innovated community-based solutions. This trend toward collaboration had sought several possible solutions and addressed many problems facing organizations today. Specific area concerns such as; equalizing regulations across early childhood programs, building public support and advisory of early childhood care, and exploring additional avenues to achieve more effective service delivery could all be resolved through a jointly developed structure (Christensen & McLaughlin, 1980)

According to Schardt (1993) creative partnerships could also lead to increased funding and enhanced financial support. Sharing of resources, a mutually beneficial commitment and

a well designed relationship provide the framework for a successful partnership. However, with any new model or change in system planning, confusion exists in the defining of roles and responsibilities of the participants involved. Clearly outlining the roles for these individuals led to less resistance of change and fear of the unknown. The role of the special educator was particularly essential for a smooth transition of intervention. In an inclusion model the special educator acts as more of a consultant to regular education teachers than a designated classroom teacher. More specifically the special educator offers assistance, encouragement and mentoring to the regular classroom teaching staff. This arrangement allows the sharing of expertise and information to cross professional domains (Buysse & Wesley,1993).

Three states were currently taking the lead in providing training and model programs for inclusion of children with special needs in community-based programs. All project coordinators in the three states wrote that a sense of trust needs to be built up between interventionists and community-based preschool/daycare providers, with sharing of knowledge, experience and respect for individual disciplines as the key to a successful model (Bruder, Deiner & Sachs, 1990).

Rose & Smith (1993a) suggest that school administrators first identify program standards to help establish quality assurance in community-based programs. Such indicators included utilizing programs which already maintain a

national accreditation or developing a set of criteria rating to meet the needs in a particular system. These authors further suggested eliciting the input of a neutral facilitator to enable the planning group to stay on task, focus on the issues and provide a smooth transition surrounding turf issues.

A formal agreement was foremost in instituting any plan or partnership (Pediatric Research & Training Center, 1989). An interagency agreement would clarify roles of the personnel and agencies involved, address legal issues, as well as serve as a contract and a guide to implementing the model; outlining each agency's responsibilities.

Description of Selected Solution

The writer investigated several ideas that would form a solution to the problem. The first idea explored was meeting with the board of education to discuss the possible placement of children with special needs in this community-based program. This meeting provided an opportunity to discuss the option of professionals working together across professional domains to have services administered to children in an inclusive setting. This solution was selected to offer a contiuum of services to children already enrolled in this agency, without interruption to their daily routine. Furthermore, additional children, in this school district, with special needs would be offered an appropriate developmental program along with typical children. Parents

would benefit by having more choices available to them in the selection of a preschool program for their children.

A second idea was to make arrangements for classroom staff members to visit model inclusive programs in this state. One program was visited because the funding base was similiar to this state funded center. The other program site offered both a preschool and daycare inclusive setting. This visitation rendered an occassion for an exchange of knowledge between professionals responsible for educating children.

Another idea was to set aside common planning time for staff members to meet with the special education staff. This planning time would permit collaboration when writing and implementing the individual education plan. Curriculum areas needing improvement were identified, resources were shared to ensure children's individual goals and objectives would be met. This writer devised a schedule to utilize the program's volunteers to allow for coverage in the classroom when planning took place. Additional classroom staff are available to this community-based program through supplementary agency partnerships already established.

Periodical awards were given to teachers and support staff, to promote positive feedback while restructuring the current organization. Awards were given for outstanding lesson plans, creative bulletin boards, extra events planned and when enthusiastic attitudes were displayed. These

awards were distributed in the form of individual plaques or gift certificates for dinner, recognizing individual contributions. These honors were publicized in the local newspaper to keep the community abreast of staff member accomplishments and to reinforce the support for change by providing motivation to staff during the process (Bolman & Deal,1991).

The writer also elected to hold team meetings. The meetings were attended by all the participants in the inclusion model. An early childhood consultant facilitated the meetings and focused on solving problems. This consultant was available to the project through a special education resource center. This individual kept the group on task, opened the lines of communication, and assisted in the development of the participants as a team (Rose & Smith,1993a).

The team consisted of all stakeholders to develop a framework for a successful inclusion partnership between a public school and this community-based preschool/daycare (Bruder, Deiner & Sachs, 1990). School officials, city administrators, board members and this writer met to discuss all planning phases. Forums were held for parents and commuity members to discuss issues pertaining to inclusion. Administrators and staff met to discuss concerns such as: planning time, joint responsibilities and legal issues. The writer developed a written plan to clarify roles of the personnel and agencies involved. An interagency agreement

was formulated to serve as a contract and a guide to implementing the model; outlining each agency's tasks (Pediatric Research and Training Center, 1989).

Report of Action Taken

When this practicum was started the writer planned an eight month implementation period. In the first month, the writer met with city officials, administrators from the Board of Education, parents and board members of this center to discuss preliminary planning stages.

The agenda for the initial meeting between the city officials, board of education administration members, director and board members was set. Questions were raised concerning tuition, transportation, feasibility of the project, qualifications of staff, sharing of responsibilities and time frame for implementation. It was decided at this meeting that an interagency agreement be written to outline specific responsibilities of each agency involved. This initial meeting took place in August to allow time to make arrangements to begin implementation in September at the start of the new school year. Previous to this initial meeting the writer discussed the concept with officials from all agencies. An informal conversation ensured all participants would be in agreement to try such an innovative program for this city. Several arrangements needed to take place before the initial meeting; including speaking with teachers from both agencies.

Change is difficult for many people and the writer felt it was important to meet with staff to introduce the concept as soon as possible. Additionally, teachers were asked to volunteer as participants in this project; allowing for a smoother transition. It was agreed that eight children with special needs would start in September in five classrooms.

A second meeting was held for parents of children with special needs and parents of the center's preschool and daycare programs. At this meeting the director of pupil personnel for the city attended, as well as the writer and an outside facilitator. The facilitator was available to the special education department through one of the special education resource centers in the state. Most of the concerns raised were from parents of children with special needs; including the following questions:

1. Will the children receive less services?
2. How much individual attention will be available to each child in a large group setting?
3. How much training did the early childhood teachers in the classroom have?

Arrangements were made with the local University teacher training programs. Students were then interviewed and selected for the program. These students served as substitutes when the regular staff were out and assisted in the preschool programs. Space logistics were worked out. A new afternoon preschool was established to provide

classrooms for the children with special needs, and allow additional typical children to be enrolled, who did not need a full daycare program.

A nurse was assigned two days a week through the board of education. Office space with a desk and phone needed to be supplied. The writer shared an office with the nurse and also a phone line.

The center usually closes the last week in August. The parents were given thirty (30) days notice as required by state licensing laws. This week was rescheduled to the first week in September. During this week the daycare center was closed for preparation of the new school year. At this time rooms were set up, bulletin boards were redone, curriculum reviewed, in-service training was provided with core training given by the writer to all staff to assist individuals in understanding the developmentally appropriate activities geared to a particular child. Lesson plans were written for the month of September. Teachers from both agencies as well as the students from the University used this time to collaborate on lesson plans, room arrangements and to discuss the needs of individual children. The facilitator spent a day at the center to assist the staff with curriculum development. Several different curriculum tapes were shown and the staff decided on a combination to establish a curriculum guide using themes (see Appendix B) for the year.

The director of pupil personnel for the board of education

met regularly throughout the month with both the writer and the special education teachers. Expectations were outlined (see Appendix C) and clarified throughout the month. This guided the special education teacher in an evolving role, and eliminated confusion.

In month three, placement teams were modified to include additional members. The teams now consisted of the special education teacher, school psychologist, outside facilitator, director of pupil personnel, the writer, early childhood teacher, speech therapist, nurse and parents. Every time a child was being considered for services the team met. The child was evaluated according to current board of education policy. The results were discussed at the meeting and the writer was available to answer questions about the placement for the child as was the early childhood teacher. The parents were then given the option to choose a placement for the child. Self contained smaller special education classes were still available in the schools.

Several pictures and articles were sent to local newspapers to help parents become aware of what was available in the community. The writer was also featured in a full page article in the regional newspaper. The article included a large color photo of one of the inclusive classrooms and focused on the innovative programming taking place at the center. Also a letter was sent to local businesses asking for donations to support the project.

During month four, the writer arranged for each classroom teacher to receive a designated planning period with the special education teacher. The special education teacher reviewed the lesson plans written by the early childhood teacher and added additional goals and objectives for each child with special needs (see Appendix D). This ensured that the goals and objectives developed for the child through an individual education plan (IEP) were met. Schedules for all personnel were coordinated to provide direct service in the classroom by the special education teacher, physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech therapist and any other designated services needed by an individual child as specified on the child's (IEP).

To keep the stakeholders in this project informed, the writer arranged for key people to view the program, throughout the fifth month. Through the involvement of the outside facilitator the state department of education became aware of this inclusion model. Therefore, the writer was contacted by the bureau chief and was asked to host the entire bureau meeting at the center. The meeting was held in the afternoon and time was designated to interview staff and answer questions about the process. The officials also observed the program first hand. The Mayor of the city was also asked to read a story to the children as part of literacy day. The Commissioner of Human Resources for the city serves as a member of the agency's board of directors and was kept well

informed of the project's progress at monthly board meetings, as were all other board of directors.

The writer submitted to the board a plan to use tuition money from the preschool program to pay for staff development of the early childhood staff who needed to pursue further degrees. The money was to be used from the tuition paid by the board of education for the slots reserved for the children with special needs. The first outstanding employee award was given. The award was a gift certificate to a local restaurant, to let the staff know their cooperation was appreciated. A holiday dinner event was organized to maintain a sense of unity among both staffs.

A winter event was sponsored by the center with a childrens' musical group and the writer invited several people to attend, including parents. The state representative for this area attended, as well as the region's congresswoman (see Appendix E). The show was designed to incorporate all the guests as participants.

Throughout the sixth month of practicum implementation planning teams continued to meet. Problems were discussed and adjustments made to smooth transitions. Staff meetings were convened by the writer to discuss concerns, progress and recommendations from the staff members. The director of pupil personnel met frequently with the writer and was also available by phone. The facilitator continued to meet with the staff monthly to work out problems. Suggestions were made

by this individual to the curriculum guide, recommending interventions in the classroom.

The students from the local university categorized books in a resource library. The resource library consisted of computers for the children provided by the board of education, resource and planning books for the staff, early childhood journals, big books, cassettes, and library books for the children.

In-service training was also continued at the center. The training was provided by a collaborating agency and was held during school hours for the staff. Arrangements were made by the writer to provide classroom coverage by utilizing substitutes and volunteers. The topics for these sessions included:

1. "Positive Teaching"
2. "How to Help Children Feel Good about Themselves"
3. "Combating Staff Burnout"
4. "How to Have a Successful Parent Group"

Both special education and early childhood staff attended. The sessions were approximately two hours in length.

An exchange program to visit other centers was established. The facilitator assisted with arrangements through several other contacts, since this person also assisted other programs in the area. Many requests came from people to view this program and talk with staff.

During the seventh month, reviews and revisions to the

planning process were formulated. Continuous meetings were held with the early childhood facilitator, problems were identified, discussed and clarified for all stakeholders involved. In addition, the writer taught in the classroom, developed lesson plans and worked with the special education teacher. The purpose was to understand problems, concerns, and to identify areas that worked well. The staff handbook was developed by the writer and the staff to help distinguish roles and responsibilities of each member. The handbook included policy procedures such as fire safety, first aid rules, regulations and job descriptions for all participants. The handbook was designed to be used in a loose leaf binder in order to add or delete material as it was modified. Schedules, names of all staff with titles, curriculum, school calendar, emergency numbers for all children by classroom were also included. The second outstanding employee award was also presented during this month.

In the final month of program implementation the program was evaluated by administrators, parents and staff. All participants had a chance to present problems or discuss issues that worked well. The writer and the early childhood facilitator monitored this meeting. All recommendations will be used to modify and improve the program for the next school year. Additionally, the writer developed a proposal for a presentation. This inclusion model was introduced at a statewide conference. The conference was sponsored by the

state department of special education. Panel members for the presentation included the director of pupil personnel, a parent of a child with special needs, an early childhood teacher, the special education teacher and the writer.

The board of directors held a staff appreciation day. All staff received individual pins for their dedication to caring. Parents and local officials were invited to visit the program for the day. The pins were presented to the staff by the Mayor and Superintendent of schools at this reception. A local newspaper photographer came to take pictures of the event.

In summary, the writer met with city officials, the board of education administration, parents and board members of this center to discuss preliminary planning stages. Teachers met to discuss roles, the curriculum was developed jointly and in-service training was provided. Formation of placement teams took place. Local newspapers were notified of progress and a letter was sent to area businesses to generate community support. Planning time was designated for teachers to plan with the special education teacher and schedules were coordinated to provide direct services in the classrooms. State, local officials and parents were invited to attend special events and observe the program. A resource library was instituted, professional staff visited other programs and there were frequent visitors to the center. Reviews and revisions to the planning process were made, meetings were ongoing with the early childhood facilitator,

problems were identified and clarified for stakeholders. In the final month, several key team members presented this model of inclusion, at a statewide conference.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

Parents of preschool children with special needs had traditionally relied on placement decisions made by school officials for placement of their children in a preschool program, regardless of the child's individual needs. Additionally, community-based preschools had been omitted when consideration for appropriate placement for children with special needs was made. An inclusive setting for children with special needs in a community-based program was an option yet to be explored and tried by administrators.

Objective one was measured by documentation of the meetings between staff and administrators. The specific objective was that at least four meetings would be held to develop an interagency agreement to place children with special needs in this community-based program. Three meetings were held and resulted in an interagency agreement. The agreement clarified roles of the personnel and agencies involved, addressed legal issues, services to

be provided, time frame, costs, as well as served as a contract and a guide to implementing the model; outlining each agency's responsibilities. Eight children with special needs were placed in the program beginning in September. At the completion of this praticum seventeen children had been placed.

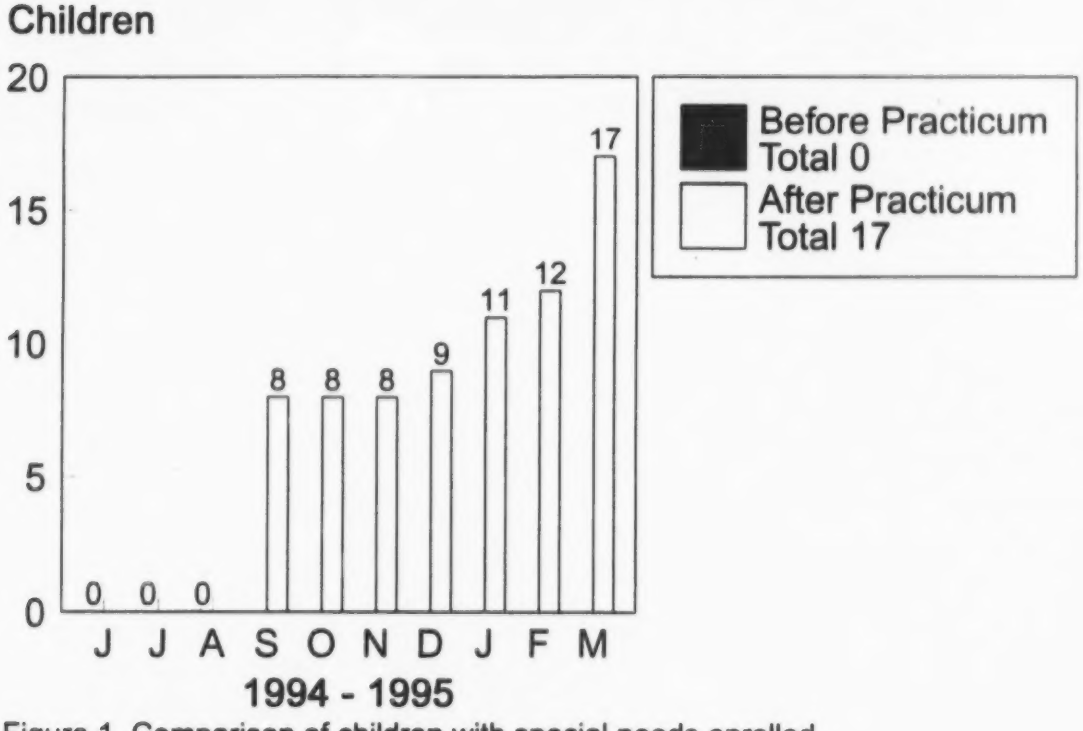

Figure 1. Comparison of children with special needs enrolled

Objective two was measured by the collection of data through the use of a likert scale to elicit information about staff's ability and confidence level to provide service in the classroom. A pre and post questionnaire was administered before and after practicum implementation.

Table 1

Results of Attitude Pre-Questionnaire

N=12 Question	% SA	% MA	% MD	% SD
1-I am comfortable taking a child with special needs in my classroom.	91%	8%	0	0
2-I feel I have enough experience and training in this area.	16%	66%	16%	0
3-I am willing to try.	100%	0	0	0
4-I don't feel I have enough time to spend with individual children.	41%	41%	8%	8%
5-I have enough confidence in my abilities to team teach with someone from another agency.	83%	16%	0	0
6-The salary difference does not bother me.	50%	8%	8%	16%
7-I am willing to combine teaching styles to formulate lesson plans.	91%	8%	0	0
8-I don't see my role as classroom teacher changing.	41%	33%	8%	16%
9-Many benefits can be gained from having a child with special needs in the classroom.	83%	16%	0	0

Key to abbreviations SA-Strongly Agree MA-Mildly Agree
MD-Mildly Disagree SD-Strongly Disagree

There was an eighty six percent response to the questionnaire by the staff. The results from Table 1 indicated that staff were comfortable from the onset with having children with special needs in their classrooms; were confident in their ability to team teach; and willing to combine lesson plans. Staff did however express concerns in the areas of having enough time to spend with individual

children, the salary difference, and role change.

Table 2

Results of Attitude Post- Questionnaire

N=12 Question	% SA	% MA	% MD	% SD
1-I am comfortable taking a child with special needs in my classroom.	91%	8%	0	0
2-I feel I have enough experience and training in this area.	50%	41%	8%	0
3-I am willing to try.	100%	0	0	0
4-I don't feel I have enough time to spend with individual children.	25%	8%	25%	41%
5-I have enough confidence in my abilities to team teach with someone from another agency.	91%	8%	0	0
6-The salary difference does not bother me.	50%	8%	8%	16%
7-I am willing to combine teaching styles to formulate lesson plans.	100%	0	0	0
8-I don't see my role as classroom teacher changing.	81%	8%	8%	0
9-Many benefits can be gained from having a child with special needs in the classroom.	91%	8%	0	0

Key to abbreviations SA-Strongly Agree MA-Mildly Agree MD-Mildly Disagree SD-Strongly Disagree

After practicum implementation, data from the post questionnaire indicated that the in-service training decreased staff apprehension of not having enough experience to work with children with special needs. Coordinating schedules, arranging for staff planning time and utilizing volunteers, enabled staff to spend

more time with individual children. The salary issue remained the same and the early childhood teachers did see their role as having changed. The data does not indicate whether the role change was perceived as positive or negative by the staff. Although the staff did respond decidedly to viewing the children with special needs as a benefit to the classroom.

Objective three, was measured by recording the number of donations and inkind services received from community resources as a result of letters sent. The specific objective was that there would be an increase in the fundraising account after practicum implementation.

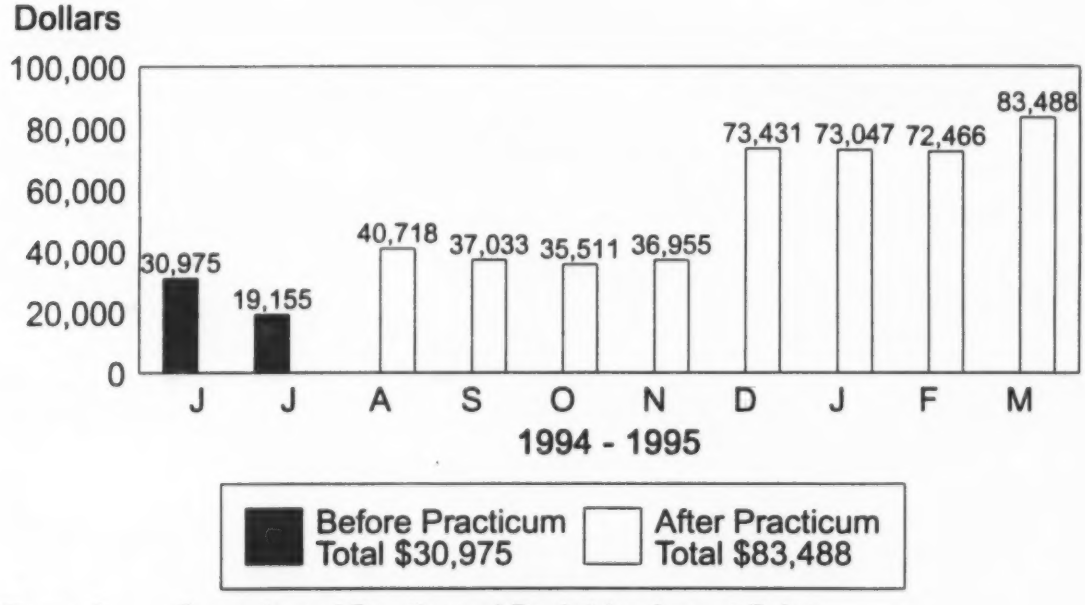

Figure 2. Comparison of Donation and Fundraising Account Before and After Practicum Implementation.

A significant outcome of this practicum was the atmosphere of team work and respect created between professionals. Increased confidence in the daycare staff and greater awareness from the

Board of Education of the tremendous responsibility daycare staff have in caring for children as well as meeting their educational needs was also displayed. The transfer of knowledge between administrators, monetary support from the community and recognition from City officials all contributed to very positive results.

Discussion

The results of the attitude questionnaire indicated staff were more comfortable in their role as a team teacher, gained confidence in their ability to work with children with special needs through training, did see their role as changing after practicum implementation and were able to see the benefits of having a child with special needs in their classroom. The salary difference, however was still an issue, with the Board of Education staff receiving five times as much for a shorter work year.

All three objectives were met. The first objective was met as evidenced by seventeen children with special needs enrolled in the center and the development of the interagency agreement. Team teaching occurs now and lesson plans are modifed to meet the needs of individual children, meeting the second objective. The third objective was met as demonstrated by the generous display of community support. The fundraising account increased significantly over the eight month period.

Additional positive outcomes were the development of a job description for the special education consultant, the scope of

services now available to daycare staff, including training and the continuing advice of the early childhood facilitator. The collaboative efforts between agencies, the many requests for speaking and conference engagements of the staff and administrators involved and the publicity generated from this innovative inclusion model all are concrete outcomes.

The goals of the practicum were met successfully. As a result of this project, planning and placement team meetings are now held at this center. Parents are able to visit the program and the writer is available to discuss questions or concerns. The parents have a choice in classroom placements for their children. Furthermore, a parent of a child with special needs has been invited to serve on the Center's Board of Directors. The youngest child in this member's family is enrolled in the toddler program, encouraging friendships to develop between parents of both typically developing children and children with special needs.

In conclusion, professionals have learned to work collaboratively to achieve effective service delivery between agencies. The areas addressed in this practicum were staffing, space utilization, increasing the quality and quantity of services for young children and their families, as well as equalizing regulations across early childhood programs. The results revealed advisory of early childhood education with consistent ongoing evaluation, facilitated continued dialogue between staff, families, and consultants. Furthermore, public support had increased and greater community awareness was established.

Recommendations

The writer would recommend that before initiating an inclusion model, early childhood programs should be developmentally appropriate for all children. Each child whether they have special needs or not should have lesson plans geared to their individual needs. A curriculum that allows for flexibility and is child initiated should work well in this type of setting. Additionally, all parties involved should be informed of any changes in advance to allow for smooth transitions wherever possible. Cooperation was the key to the success of this project. The writer advises communicating in staff meetings as well as with individuals as frequently as possible. Also initiate suggestions by individuals to assist them with changes. Encourage staff to exchange ideas as team members, and as an administrator demonstrate appreciation for the concerns and opinions of all participants.

Dissemination

The project has received tremendous publicity within this state. Several visitors have been to the center. Requests for copies of this practicum have come from local universities, which have already established partnerships with this center, including an ivy league school.

The practicum will be available to board members, the State Department of Special Education and the agency of the Early Childhood facilitator. The Superintendent of Schools has requested a

copy, as has the Commissioner of Human Resources for this City.

The writer also belongs to a state funded center directors' forum and will do a presentation for members of the group. Initial planning stages were shared through presentations at two national conferences and a proposal developed for this praciticum was accepted for presentation at a state wide conference. The writer was subsequently invited to join a panel of distinguished faculty members at a local ivy league university to share this inclusion model with a professional audience.

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APPENDIX A

ATTITUDE QUESTIONNAIRE

ATTITUDE QUESTIONNAIRE

	STRONGLY AGREE	MILDLY AGREE	MILDLY DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
1)I am comfortable taking a child with special needs in my classroom.				
2)I feel I have enough experience and training in this area.				
3)I am willing to try.				
4)I don't feel I have enough time to spend with individual children.				
5)I have enough confidence in my abilities to team teach with someone from another agency.				
6)The salary difference does not bother me.				
7)I am willing to combine teaching styles to formulate lesson plans.				
8)I don't see my role as classroom teacher changing.				
9)Many benefits can be gained from having a child with special needs in the classroom.				

APPENDIX B

CURRICULUM GUIDE

Curriculum Guide

September
Theme-School Days
- Safety
- Colors
- Fingerplays
- Sorting
- Shapes

Science-Our Environment

October
Theme-Let's Pretend
- Fire Safety
- Discovery
- Fingerplays

Science-Fall/Hibernation

November
Theme-Families
- Sharing
- Fingerplays
- Same & Different
- Cooking
- Manners

Science-Feathered Friends

December
Theme-Happy Holidays
- Expressing Feelings(emotions)
- Safety at Home
- Fingerplays

Science-Winter/Electricity

January
Theme-Jobs People Do
- Community Workers & Leaders
- Sequencing
- Senses
- Fingerplays
- Review colors and shapes
- Science-Extinct and Endangered Species/ Conservation

February
Theme-Caring and Sharing
- Feelings
- Fingerplays
- Famous People
- Healthy Habits

Science-Water & Air Experiments

March
Theme-Growing Up Healthy
- Body Parts
- Food Groups
- Nutrition

Science-Environment/Pollution

April
Theme-New Beginnings
- Spring Holidays
- Farm Animals
- Review Shapes & Colors

Science-Spring & Plants

May
Theme-Let's Go to the Zoo!
- Variety Show
- Special Person Day
- Zoo Animals

Science-Pets; Gardens

June
Theme-Summer Time
- Special Person Day
- Graduation Activities
- Transportation
- Summer Vacation

Science-Exploring the seashore/ Insects

APPENDIX C

ROLE DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATOR

Role Description of the Special Educator

Plan weekly with classroom teachers:

* to share important information about children placed in their classrooms.
* discuss and update goals and objectives written on IEP's.
* plan lessons that will include goals and objectives; modify plans to meet needs of special needs students.
* share ideas for activities that follow monthly themes.
* offer advice and assistance to teachers who are experiencing difficulties working with the special needs children in their classes.
* direct large/small group activities within the classroom.

Spend time in classrooms working with groups of children (focusing in on special needs children).
Modeling lessons for those teachers who request it/or if there is a need to do so. Offering examples of modified materials for those students who require it.

As a member of the Planning and Placement Team.

* Act as facilitator during play-based assessments.
* Write up reports on evaluations done with team members.
* Arrange Planning and Placement Team Meetings with the team for play-based children and birth to three children.
* Attend Planning and Placement Team Meetings.

APPENDIX D

MODIFIED LESSON PLAN

MODIFIED LESSON PLAN

Subject: Health and Nutrition Age Group: Four Years Group Size: Fifteen

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITY OR ACTIVITIES	INSTRUCTIONAL ARRANGEMENT	MATERIALS
1. Children will listen attentively for at least five minutes.	Introduction to story "The Tooth Book" Discussion, cooperative learning.	Children will sit on multi-colored rug.	Book: "The Tooth Book" by Theo LeSeig
2. Children will interact positively with each other in a group activity.	Children will go over the food chart with the teacher. The teacher will explain healthy foods vs junk foods. The teacher will hold up a large toothbrush and ask the children to tell her what they might use it for. The teacher will pass a mirror around and ask the children to look at their teeth.	Transition: From rug to tables. Children will be asked to stand up when the color they are wearing is called. Then they will move to two long tables.	Poster charts with magazine cut-outs or food wrappers depicting 1. "Healthy Foods" 2. "Junk Foods" 1 Large Toothbrush 1 Hand-held mirror

MODIFIED LESSON PLAN

Subject: Health and Nutrition Age Group: Three Years Group Size: Fifteen

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITY OR ACTIVITIES	INSTRUCTIONAL ARRANGEMENT	MATERIALS
3. Children will follow simple directions and use appropriate grasp when using scissors.	"Happy /Sad Teeth" Children will cut out one tooth each from construction paper. Each child will then have the opportunity to take a food item out of the bag and match it to the food charts and try to convey whether that item will make their tooth "happy" or "sad."	Children will sit at the two long tables to cut out teeth. Children will receive one tooth pattern each. They will be asked to cut along the tooth outline. When they finish cutting, the children will move back to the multicolored rug area.	White construction paper folded in half with half a tooth shape traced on it. Two large cut-out teeth One Happy Fac One Sad Face
4. Children will be able to match food item to the appropriate chart and describe whether that itme makes their tooth happy or sad. Either by using words or holding up their tooth to the Happy/Sad Teeth shown.	Children will review with the teacher what they need to do to keep their teeth healthy. End with children holding up their teeth and a new toothbrush each. Sing: "This is the way we brush our teeth."	When they are all seated, the children will take turns matching the food items to the charts. Transition From tables to rug. Each child will be asked to select a book to look at while they are waiting for everyone else to finish cutting.	Two large paper bags containing healthly foods vs. junk foods, i.e. orange, apple, cereal box, milk carton, raisins, yogurt, bananas, etc. Lollipops, candy bars, soda bottle, cake mix box, etc., enough for each child to pick one. 15 children's tooth brushes

ADDITIONAL GOALS & OBJECTIVES

1. C.G. Goal: To develop receptive language skills.

   Objective: Will respond appropriately to simple verbal commands without cuing.

2. N.M. Goal: To develop appropriate social skills.

   Objective: Will engage in positive behavior when interacting peers.

3. T.J. Goal: To develop appropriate social skills.

   Objective: Will maintain eye contact with peers and teachers when interacting.

4. A.J. Goal: To develop early verbal skills.

   Objective: Will answer verbally when his name is called.

APPENDIX E

LETTER FROM A MEMBER OF CONGRESS

327 Cannon Building
Washington, DC 20515-0703

57

UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Dear Friends:

For fifteen years, this center has stood out as an extraordinary source of learning and social development for the children of The staff is exceptionally dedicated, and hundreds of families have benefited from the innovative, sensitive approach offered here. Your facility is a wonderful resource in this community; the recently-established special needs pre-school program is just the latest example of your creative commitment to young people. I experienced that commitment during a recent visit, and I look forward to stopping by again in the future.

Congratulations to the Child Development Center on this special occasion. Best wishes to you all.

Sincerely,

Member of Congress

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